GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2297
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Complaints pertaining to Slow Internet Speeds and Expensive Tariff
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware of the fact that mobile users are reportedly experiencing slower internet speed and poor coverage despite subscribing to an expensive 4G tariff plan and if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government in this regard;

(b) whether the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has been receiving complaints regarding tariff offers not being adequately transparent and if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government in this regard;

(c) whether the Government proposes to conduct any study and take action on the issue of the abuse of dominant position in the market and the predatory pricing by the telecom service providers; and

(d) if so, the details and the outcome thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE (IC) OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS &
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI MANOJ SINHA)
(a) The speed of mobile internet is dependent on a number of factors such as closeness to the cell serving the customer, the number of users being served by the cell, the traffic handled by the cell, the user equipment/mobile handset used by the customer etc. As such, the mobile users may experience different speeds at different locations and time of usage.

The grievances booked in Public Grievance Portal of Government of India (CPGRAMS) are classified under various categories, which include "Improper Network Coverage" and "Poor Speed of Broadband". The number of grievances booked under these categories for the year 2016 (1st January 2016 to 31st December 2016) is as below:

Improper Network Coverage- 3302
Poor Speed of Broadband - 2544

There is no categorization specifically regarding poor 4G speed. The grievances which are booked in CPGRAMS Portal are forwarded to concerned Service Providers for necessary action and after online reporting of status about action taken by the respective Service Provider the case is disposed off by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

For wireless data services, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has prescribed the Quality of Service (QoS) Standards through "The Standards of Quality of Service for Wireless Data Services Regulations, 2012" on 4th December 2012. As per these regulations, the service providers have been reporting their performance on the parameters minimum throughput and average throughput. The performance reported by service providers on wireless data service is published quarterly on TRAI website.

TRAI had launched a mobile App named "TRAI My Speed". This application allows customers to measure their data speed experience and sends the results to TRAI. The application captures and sends coverage, data speed and other network information along with device and location of the tests to the TRAI - "MySpeed" Portal. The TRAI - "MySpeed" Portal allows the users to explore the mobile data experience of consumers across India. The information displayed on the web site is based on crowd sourced data collected over a period of time and spread over geographical area.

(b) Inadequacy of transparency in tariff offers have been brought to the notice of TRAI by various stakeholders including consumers. The concerns expressed, inter-alia, relates to multiplicity of tariff offers causing confusion amongst consumers, frequent changes in the tariff plans enrolled, misleading tariff advertisements etc. TRAI has taken several measures to enhance transparency in tariff offers and to protect the interest of consumers. Some of the major measures taken are listed below:
(i) With a view to remove confusion in respect of tariff plans marketed as having 'Lifetime Validity', TRAI issued regulatory guidelines vide Telecommunications Tariff Order (TTO) 43rd Amendment notified on 21st March, 2006. Any tariff plan presented, marketed or offered as having lifetime or unlimited validity shall continue to be available to the subscriber as long as the service provider is permitted to provide such telecom service under the current license or renewed license. The service providers were told to inform the customers the current period of expiry of their license.
(ii) Direction dated 1st September, 2008, and 48th Amendment to TTO notified on 1st September, 2008 mandated several transparency measures including the following:-
â€¢ Tariff information to be provided in vernacular language also.

â€¢ Blackout days (customary/festival days on which free/concessional calls/SMS are not available) restricted to a maximum of 5 days in a calendar year. Such days to be pre-specified and no subsequent alteration or addition is permitted.
â€¢ Straight tariff reductions are to be passed on to consumers without any precondition.
â€¢ The service providers shall not insist on recharge between periods lesser than six months in lifetime plans for remaining connected during the promised lifetime validity period.
(iii) Direction on publication of Tariff plans :
TRAI has issued a Direction on publication of Tariff plans on 16th Jan 2012 which is aimed at enhancing transparency in telecom tariff offers and facilitating the subscribers to choose plan that suit individual requirement best. Service providers are to publish all tariff plans in a service area for prepaid and postpaid subscribers in the given format in one regional and one English newspaper at an interval not more than six months. Full details of tariffs are to be made available at Customer care centre, Points of Sales and websites of the TSPs in the given format with a view to facilitate easy and transparent comparison.
(iv) Direction on preventing misleading advertisements:
TRAI has issued a Direction on preventing misleading advertisements on 26.03.2012. This Direction is intended to further improve transparency in telecom tariff advertisements and facilitate the subscribers to choose plan that suit individual requirement best. It has been mandated that advertisements published by service providers are transparent and non-misleading and unambiguous, disclose all material information in unambiguous manner and contain the website address and customer care number of the telecom access service provider. The advertisements issued in vernacular languages should contain all the mandatory disclosures in the same vernacular language.
(v) TRAI has issued Telecom Consumer Protection Regulation on 06.01.2012 streamlining tariff offers to prepaid consumers to facilitate enhanced transparency in the provision of service.
(vi) To address the issue of multiplicity of tariff plans on offer in the market, it has been mandated that no service provider can offer more than 25 tariff plans at a given point of time in a service area.
(vii) With a view to provide to consumers stability in the tariff plans for a reasonable period, TRAI has prohibited any hike in tariff for a period of six months after enrolment of a subscriber into a tariff plan or at any time during the promised validity period of the plan. In the case of lifetime plans, the TSPs were prohibited to effect any adverse change to the disadvantage of the consumer at any point of time.
(viii) The TTO recognizes the right of subscribers to choose any tariff plan on-offer at any point of time. Subscribers are allowed to move across tariff plans and even across prepaid-postpaid platforms without having to pay any migration charges.
(c) & (d) TRAI has issued a consultation paper on 17.02.2017 on Review of Regulatory Principles of Tariff Assessment. This consultation paper deals with emergent issues and challenges, inter-alia, related to regulatory principles of tariff assessment e.g. adherence to the principle of non-predatory pricing, meaning of predatory pricing, relevant market, assessment of dominant position, transparency, promotional offers, disclosures and non-discrimination etc. The consultation process aims to bring about greater clarity in interpretation of various regulatory principles set out in the TTO in consonance with the best global practices. On the basis of feedback received during the consultation process, the TRAI proposes to make a comprehensive review of the tariff framework in a phased manner. A comprehensive consultation process in TRAI takes about 6 to 8 months' time to complete the process and thereafter TRAI finalizes its Recommendations/ Regulation/ Order.

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